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ever, as we have already hinted, many of the plates are gems in their way, and are of themselves worth all the money charged for the volume in which they appear. We have likewise made an exception in favour of the poetry, which, speaking generally, we deem superior to that which appeared in the last year's *Annals*; and of which we shall afford our readers an opportunity of judging.

#### FRIENDSHIP'S OFFERING.

"Constance," the frontispiece to this elegant little volume, engraved by W. H. Egleton, from a painting of the original portrait by H. Hawkins, is as much to our taste as any we have seen in any of the *Annals* of the present year; and the credit of the artists regularly engaged for this work is well supported by several other pieces of considerable merit. "The Evening Hymn" is finely conceived, and finely executed; and in the accompanying verses there is a touch of genuine poetry.

#### THE EVENING HYMN.

By Thomas Miller.

How many days, with mute adieu,  
Have gone down yon untrodden sky!  
And still it looks as clear and blue  
As when it first was hung on high.  
The rolling sun, the frowning cloud  
That drew the lightning in its rear,  
The thunder, tramping deep and loud,  
Have left no foot-mark there.

The village bells, with silver chime,  
Come softened by the distant shore;  
Though I have heard them many a time,  
They never rung so sweet before.

A silence rests upon the hill,  
A listening awe pervades the air;  
The very flowers are shut, and still,  
And bowed as if in prayer.

And in this hushed and breathless close,  
O'er earth, and air, and sky, and sea,  
That still low voice in silence goes,  
Which speaks alone, great God! of Thee.

The whispering leaves, the far-off brook,  
The linnet's warble fainter grown,  
The hive-bound bee, the lonely rook—  
All these their Maker own.

Now shine the starry hosts of light,  
Gazing on earth with golden eyes;  
Bright guardians of the blue-browed night!  
What are ye in your native skies?

I know not! neither can I know,  
Nor on what leader ye attend,  
Nor whence ye came, nor whither go,  
Nor what your aim or end.

I know they must be holy things,  
That from a roof so sacred shine,  
Where sounds the beat of angel wings,  
And footsteps echo all Divine.

Their mysteries I never sought,  
Nor hearkened to what Science tells,  
For, oh! in childhood I was taught,  
That God amidst them dwells.

The darkening woods, the fading trees,  
The grasshopper's last feeble sound,  
The flowers just awakened by the breeze,  
All leave the stillness more profound.

The twilight takes a deeper shade,  
The dusky pathways blacker grow,  
And silence reigns in glen and glade—  
All, all is mute below.

And other eves as sweet as this  
Will close upon as calm a day,  
And, sinking down the deep abyss  
Will, like the last, be swept away;  
Until eternity is gained,  
That boundless sea without a shore,  
That without time for ever reigned,  
And will when time's no more.

Now Nature sinks in soft repose,  
A living semblance of the grave;  
The dew steals noiseless on the rose,  
The boughs have almost ceased to wave;  
The silent sky, the sleeping earth,  
Tree, mountain, stream, the humble sod,  
All tell from whom they had their birth,  
And cry, "Behold a God!"

We have only room for another extract from this volume:

#### I ONCE HAD FRIENDS.

By the Author of "Chartley," "The Invisible Gentleman," &c.

I once had friends—a thousand friends! and I might have them yet,  
But, now, I have a *chosen few*, whom I can ne'er forget.  
The thousand—let them go and come—like swallows to the lake,  
But the few—to lose the chosen few—methinks my heart would break!

'Tis not the kindred tie of blood, though much in that there be;  
'Tis warmth of heart and flow of soul that bind those few to me:  
The converse sweet of "auld lang syne," is memory's delight,  
And joyous hope to meet again still makes the future bright.

What are to me the crowded halls of fashion, wealth, or power,  
Whose greatest praise is briefly scanned—to "kill" the passing hour!

The passing hour, whose heavy tread bears down the listless train,

Who fly from solitude with hope—yet ever hope in vain.

If thou hast friends—a thousand friends, by wealth or rank endowed,

And meet'st with smiles amid the gay and fashionable crowd,  
Rate at its worth the practised phrase which all to each impart;  
But, oh! enshrine the *chosen few*—deep in thine inmost heart.

#### MEETINGS OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

##### LOW STATE OF EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

On Tuesday the Statistical Section room was crowded, in consequence of its being known that a report would be presented on the question of Education. Mr. Langton, of Manchester, read a report on the state of education in that town. He stated, that at a meeting of the Statistical Society, on the 23d April, 1854, a committee was appointed to examine into the state of the Day, Sunday, Charity, and Infant Schools in the borough of Manchester, and to report on the number of children contained in them, and the nature and efficacy of the instruction there received.

The following statement will show that the management of the schools in some parts of England is a good deal upon the Irish plan; at all events, we should suppose the masters to be Irish. The report, after stating that the Dame Schools are generally found in dirty unwholesome rooms, damp cellars, or dilapidated garrets, observes that—

"One of the best of these schools is kept by a blind man, who hears his scholars their lessons, and explains them with great simplicity; he is, however, liable to interruption in his academic labours, as his wife keeps a mangle, and he is obliged to turn it for her."

The state of the Common Day Schools is even worse:

"The masters themselves have generally a better opinion of their own qualifications for their office. One of them observed, during a visit paid to his school, that there were too many schools to do any good, adding, 'I wish government would pass a law, that nobody but *them as is high learnt* should keep school, and then *we* might stand a chance to do some good.'

"Most of the masters and mistresses of these schools, seemed to be strongly impressed with the superiority of their own plans to those of any other school, and were very little inclined to listen to any suggestions respecting improvements in the system of education that had been made in other places.—'The old road is the best,' they would sometimes say. One master stated, that he had adopted a system which he thought would at once supply the great desiderata in education—'it is simply,' he said, 'in watching the dispositions of the children, and putting them especially to that particular thing which they take